

18 February 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Intelligence)

SUBJECT : Meeting of the Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee

1. The undersigned with [REDACTED] attended the executive session of the subcommittee beginning at 2 p.m. on 18 February. 25X1A

2. Witnesses before the subcommittee were US Ambassador to Haiti Raymond L. Thurston and US Ambassador to Venezuela C. Allan Stewart. The session lasted approximately two and a half hours.

3. Ambassador Thurston appeared first and began with a general statement of the situation in Haiti. With respect to the Communist threat in Haiti, he stated that in his judgment the Communists are not now in a position to seize power. However, the longer the Duvalier regime remains in power the greater will be the ultimate Communist capability of coming to power. The Ambassador rather clearly implied that it is US policy to support a responsible and capable group of Haitians who are opposed to Duvalier in the expectation that they will, before very many more months, form an acceptable successor regime.

4. With respect to the Communist threat from Cuba, Ambassador Thurston stated that at present Haiti does not appear high on the priority list of Cuban subversion. Hampering any Cuban subversive effort against Haiti would be the language barrier and the fact that Haitian Communists are oriented more toward France and the French Communist circles than they are toward Cuba. Nevertheless, Cuban propaganda is directly aimed at Haiti and there are some 100,000 creole-speaking people of Haitian descent living in Cuba who would be used in a subversive effort against Haiti. He knows of one Haitian Communist who has received guerrilla training in Cuba--Gene Depestre--and assumed that others probably have.

5. During the question period, there were several items of interest discussed. Representative Fascell

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queried the Ambassador on a report that Duvalier sent a mission to Moscow last year seeking Soviet assistance. The Ambassador affirmed that this was the case--he was referring to Raymond A. Boyce, Duvalier's ex-Foreign Minister who is believed to have visited Moscow in June 1962. The Ambassador expressed some doubt as to how seriously the Soviets may have treated any approach from Haiti, but did state that the Haitians did appear to be trying to play the other side of the street during the Junta del Este conference in January 1962.

6. The only time CIA was specifically mentioned during the testimony was when Representative Thomson asked Ambassador Thurston what were the ways in which the US is attempting to cause the emergence of a more responsible government to replace Duvalier's. The Ambassador replied that what we are trying to do is to influence the capable and responsible Haitians who would probably replace Duvalier. The Representative queried: "Through CIA." The Ambassador answered: "I would hope we could all play a role."

7. Ambassador Stewart opened his testimony with a general statement stressing his view that President Betancourt is proving to be an extremely effective opponent of the Venezuelan Communists and, because of this, in Venezuela "we are winning." He credits Betancourt with having understood Castro from the beginning. There is no question, the Ambassador stated, that Venezuela is Castro's first target in Latin America. However, the Cubans "are not getting away with it." They have supplied propaganda and have trained hundreds of Venezuelans in guerrilla warfare. There is no evidence of Cuban arms aid, which would really be unnecessary since there are hundreds of weapons floating around Venezuela. There is evidence of some Cuban financial assistance. However, the Venezuelan Communist guerrilla effort--which is straight out of the Cuban book--is failing because the Communist guerrillas lack peasant support. The Communists are having better success in the cities, but even here the situation is improving markedly as the police become better trained. The Ambassador concluded that "the situation in Venezuela is under control."

8. During the question period, Representative Fancoll attempted to clarify the Ambassador's references to the danger to Venezuela from Cuba. The Ambassador's reply was to the effect that, while the Venezuelan Communists would be fighting Betancourt whether or not there was a Castro in Cuba, nevertheless the Castro regime in Cuba does represent a "very dangerous" threat to Betancourt. Castro,

the Ambassador stated, provided a "shot in the arm to the Venezuelan Communists."

9. Another question dealt with the old stories that Betancourt is a crypto-Communist, which the Ambassador dismissed as being inconceivable in the light of Betancourt's action since becoming president.

10. There were a number of questions on the case of the extradition of ex-dictator Perez Jimenez which is now going through the US courts. The congressman indicated that they had received many letters on this subject. The Ambassador's opinion is that Perez Jimenez should and must be extradited back to Venezuela if the US Supreme Court decides he is extraditable.

11. During the testimony of both Ambassadors, Representative E. A. Gross made a point of asking how long they had been serving in their current posts and how long they had been in the US Foreign Service.

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12. [REDACTED] will be obtaining the full transcripts of the proceedings once completed by the shorthand reporter.

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